

Question route for focus group with physical therapists

Given that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus groups (the researcher does not have control over what the participants may disclose following the focus groups), the moderator will begin by emphasizing that anything participants hear should be kept confidential.

Introductory round

Let's start with an introduction. Tell us your first name and how long you have been a physical therapist. [Moderator leads to set example: name, PT experience, current work place]. [Round robin question]

Opening questions

1. Today we are going to be talking about working with patients who have multiple sclerosis. When I say the words, "multiple sclerosis," what is the first thing that comes to mind? [Answer to be short]
[Round robin question]
2. Can you tell us about some of the experiences you have had working with patients who have MS?

Transition questions

3. Think back to the last time you saw a patient with MS who came to PT because they had walking difficulties. What were their major problems related to walking?
 - a. What sort of specific functional problems did they experience due to their walking difficulties?
 - b. In your mind, is it important for a patient to be able to walk quickly? If not speed, then what are some of the other goals for walking?
4. Keep thinking about this patient with walking difficulties due to MS, and any other patients you remember with walking problems. What sorts of treatment activities did you use to address their walking limitations?
 - a. Did you use more than one approach?
 - b. How often did you see the patient? How was it decided how many treatment sessions the patient would receive?

Key questions

5. What were some of the tests and measures you used to document their difficulties and assess the impact of your treatment over time?
 - a. Why did you select those measures?
6. How do you assess if your treatment has been effective?
Probe: Can you put in words the decision-making process you go through?
7. How do you determine if *the patient* has experienced a meaningful benefit from therapy?
Probe: Is there a particular tool you use? What do you ask them? Is their perception of improvement consistent with yours? What are the differences between what they perceive and what you perceive?

Closing

8. Our purpose today was to try to understand how physical therapists treat walking difficulties in MS, and how PTs determine what a meaningful improvement in someone's walking is. Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't? Is there anything that you wanted to say but didn't get the chance to say?